

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2183
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
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PASS AGRICULTURE FOR FAS/HUGHES/RIESZ

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, ETRD, CA
SUBJ: CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL MOVEMENT (CAM) STRIKE

REF: OTTAWA 960 AND 1077

1. AS CANADIAN AGRICULTURE MOVEMENT (CAM) TWO-WEEK BEEF STRIKE NEARED ITS END, MOST ASSESSMENTS WERE THAT RESULTS WERE MIXED, IF NOT POOR. THE STRIKES INITIALLY CAPTURED FRONT-PAGE NEWS COVERAGE AND WERE LEAD ITEMS ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA, BUT INTEREST SOON FLAGGED, AND AT THE END CAM BECAME ALMOST A NON-STORY. IF PRICES WENT UP AT LOCAL BUTCHER SHOPS, INCREASES WERE NOT DRAMATIC ENOUGH TO AROUSE MUCH PUBLIC RESPONSE.

2. IN WINNIPEG, ON SOME DAYS, CATTLE DELIVERIES TO STOCKYARDS WERE DOWN 75 PER CENT, AND THIS LED TO PACKING PLANT LAYOFFS AFFECTING 400-600 WORKERS. AS OF MARCH 4, SLAUGHTER CATTLE PRICES HAD RISEN ABOUT DOLS 2 PER HUNDREDWEIGHT, BUT IT WAS DISPUTED WHETHER
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STRIKE HAD REALLY CAUSED THIS INCREASE, OR WHETHER PRICES WOULD HAVE RISEN ANWAY BECAUSE OF DECREASING BEEF SUPPLIES AND GROWIHG BAND.

3. IN SASKATCHEWAN, THE STRIKE GARNERED MORE MEDIA INTEREST, AND PARTIVIPATION BY BEEF PRODUCERS APPEARED TO BE MORE WIDESPREAD AFFECTING AS MANY AS 9 DIFFERENT

STOCKYARDS. AN ESTIMATED 400 PACKING HOUSE WORKERS ALSO WERE LAID OFF AS DELIVERIES WERE REDUCED BY AS MUCH AS 75 PER CENT.

4. IN REGINA, VIOLENCE WHICH LEFT ONE STRIKER CRITICALLY INJURED GAVE THE MOVEMENT ADDED MEDIA VALUE, AND PROBABLY INCREASED THE NUMBER OF PICKETS AS A RESULT.

5. AT THE MARKETPLACE, STORES REPORTED PRICE INCREASES OF 5 TO 10 CENTS A POUND, BUT THERE WERE FEW CONSUMER PROTESTS AS INCREASES OF THIS MAGNITUDE ARE NOT UNCOMMON, WITH OR WITHOUT A STRIKE.

6. IN SUM, IT WAS NOT WELL ORGANIZED, AND SEEMED TOO BRIEF TO HAVE REAL IMPACT ON PRICES. IRONICALLY, THE STRIKERS MAY HAVE HURT THEMSELVES THE MOST, ACCORDING TO THE MANITOBA BEEF GROWERS ASSOCIATION AS CATTLE HELD BACK WILL HAVE TO GO TO MARKET SOMETIME, AND THE SLOWDOWN WILL PROBABLY ONLY DESTABILIZE THE MARKET FURTHER.

7. NEITHER THE SASKATCHEWAN NOR THE MANITOBA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS TOOK A STAND ON THE STRIKE.
HUTSON

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